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Baldwin Park Unified Counselor Fosters College-bound Culture

BALDWIN PARK – Recent Baldwin Park High School graduate Isabela Caballero returned to her alma mater to speak to Jones Junior High students about her experiences as a university freshman.

Caballero credited her success in middle school to Sergio Barragan, a 12-year counselor at Jones, who helped her achieve academically by collaborating with teachers to ensure she was working at her highest ability.

Barragan founded College 411 in 2011, a program that connects students with Jones alumni like Caballero to learn about higher education.

“Before participating in College 411, I didn’t realize how important it is to go back and share my experiences and set an example for the younger students,” Caballero said. “I wish I could have experienced something similar in middle school because it would have cleared up a lot of misconceptions about college.”

Caballero, a public health major at University of California, Merced, shared with students her experiences living in dorms and the process in declaring a major.

This school year, Barragan expanded College 411 to include college visits, with eighth-graders touring the University of La Verne, UC Riverside and California State University, Long Beach. Students were given an overview of academic and social life with opportunities to see lecture halls, classrooms and dorm-living.

“I enjoy helping students grow into mature individuals,” Barragan said. “When students return for College 411, you can see that what we do here at Jones has an impact and it inspires me to continue cultivating a culture of success.”

As a counselor, Barragan guides students to appropriate classes, highlights college and career paths, and eases the transition from middle to high school. His role extends beyond the academic field as he works closely with students to assess personal struggles and achievements.

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News

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Barragan grew up in Mexico and moved to La Verne to attend Damien High School. He earned a bachelor's degree in environmental biology and a master's in school counseling from the University of La Verne.

"My goal going into education was to provide students with the educational foundation that I lacked as a student in Mexico," Barragan said.

Barragan started as a science teacher at Jones Junior High in 2001, but his dream was to fill the role of counselor.

As a teacher, Barragan was inspired when his students had moments of insight and understood what was being taught. Now as a counselor, he can see his students grow as they discover the importance of education.

"Sergio Barragan is a staple at Jones Junior High and he exemplifies the dedicated staff we have at Baldwin Park Unified," Superintendent Dr. Froilan N. Mendoza said. "He works to ensure our students receive a high-quality education in a supportive environment that prepares them for higher education and the workforce."

PHOTOS

BPUSD_JONES_COUNSELOR_1: Sergio Barragan, a 12-year counselor at Jones Junior High School, empowers his students to achieve academic and personal success by preparing them for high school and creating a college-bound culture on campus.